

PERSONAL BACKGROUND : Discussion about his name. He was born in Bergen, Norway on June 13, 1901.

PARENTS Father was Johan Johanneson Tøsse. Tøsse is the name of the place his father came from.

Changed his name to Johnson when he came to the U.S. because people called him Johnson.

MOTHER Helen Johanneson. Her maiden name was the same as her married name.

PARENT'S WORK His father was a machinist in the shipyard. His mother was a housewife.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS Six brothers and two sisters. One died when John was two years old. He describes what his brothers did. They all stayed in Norway and lived in Bergen.

One brother was a chief engineer on boats for the Norwegian government during the war.

CHILDHOOD : Lived in Bergen. Had a nice home. Good parents.

SCHOOL : Had seven years of school. After school he worked in a bakery delivering bread. Worked as a gardener and learned this as his trade.

CHRISTMAS Ate lutefisk. Good Christmas. Didn't go to church on Christmas Eve because it was too far away. Had trees and presents.

CHRISTMAS Had lots of entertainment. Went visiting friends.

FAMILY HOME Lots of room for all the children. Father owned two houses. Used the attic when the house was crowded.

JULENISSEN In a way they believed in it. Doesn't believe in trolls. Doesn't know where all these stories came from.

LEIF ERIKSON Never heard of him until he came to the U.S.

SCHOOL Finished school in Norway. Was confirmed. Started school when 7 and quite when 14.

WORK : Had to make some money for himself so he went to work. He did errand work and gardening. Made good money gardening in Norway.

REASONS FOR COMING TO THE U.S. Was 22 years old. 'Greener grass on the other side of the fence.'

PARENTS'S RESPONSE They thought it was all right. He was old enough to do what he wanted. He left July 22, 1923 on the Bergensfjord.

BOAT TRIP : 9-10 days. Cost over \$1000 (he thinks). Borrowed money from a cousin in Norway.

John was planning to become a seaman, but decided that it wasn't the life for him. A dirty life, didn't like it.

WORK Worked for a tannery in Norway, which was one of the biggest, named Danielson. A dirty job, wet, couldn't wear shoes. Wore wooden shoes.

ARMY For 72 days, was a recruit for 24 days. Had to go every year. Military was compulsory.

This was when John went to sea. Dumbest thing he ever did. Liked to be in Norway but wanted to see the other side of the ocean.

MILITARY Learned discipline. To behave yourself.

CHRISTIANITY On both sides of the family he learned this. Didn't go to church much because of the distance. He mentions a minister named Jorgenson.

CONFIRMED Had to know your stuff. Talks about confirmation day. Answering question in the front of the church. 200-300 people in the congregation. Monday they paraded around in confirmation clothes.

CHILDREN His only son died in the Korean War when he was 19 years old.

BOAT TRIP No seasickness. Good food on the boat, homemade breads, cookies, and cakes. Had menus to order from. Had a big cake for those with birthdays.

BOAT TRIP Lots of entertainment, dancing. Had a good time on the trip over. Didn't know anybody when he left. Met a guy from Skien, Norway. He worked for a floor company in Tacoma and married a friend of John's wife.

ELLIS ISLAND : Like a bunch of sheep. People stealing things. John had a sack of food stolen. People there took care of you. Asked how much money you had.

TRAIN TRAVEL Took the train straight to Tacoma. Couldn't speak English. Made out on the train because someone could always translate, a Swedish conductor. Took four days from New York to Tacoma. Changed trains in Chicago.

John got off first in Seattle thinking at first that it was Tacoma. His cousin picked him up in Tacoma. Cousin lived on 23rd and K Street.

NATIONALITIES Norwegians, Danes, Swedes, and Russians mostly in the area. Not many blacks.

COUSIN Was married to a Swedish fellow named Johnson Elefson. He worked for the Weyerhaeuser Lumber Company.

COUSIN'S FARM Small raised tomatoes, vegetables and berries. John wasn't a farmer. He didn't like it. He went to the city looking for work.

WORK : Worked at St. Paul Tacoma Lumber Co., digging ditches. Dirty work. Boss was a Norwegian. Worked here quite a few years.

HOUSING Lived in K Street. Rented a room from a Norwegian lady and her daughter. Paid very little, \$2 a week.

MEALS Went to Mr. Bakke from Ringerike in Norway. He was an old timer. He had a boarding house on 15th and L. He made very good meals. Mr. Bakke used to be a clerk at McCormicks store down by where Sears is today. During the epidemic Bakke had to stay home and care for those at the boarding house. John paid \$6 a week for food.

LAY OFFS Happened once or twice a year when taking inventory. Factories closed down. Quit eating at Bakke's but then returned because meals were all-you-can eat for 35 cents.

BAKKE'S Had to be there by 8:30am on Sunday because Bakke went to church. He cooked Norwegian dinner. Every Saturday he had rømmegrøt. He cooked for 25 people.

BAKKE He bought all his meat on K Street. They kept the meat at the store for him. He didn't have a freezer at the boarding house.

John didn't starve.

LEARNING THE LANGUAGE Worked with many Norwegians. 1924-1925 worked in shipping, loading lumber onto cars. John didn't understand a fellow he was working with who was an American from Kansas. Learned English from his fellow workers. They worked together for 17 years. John went to Central School for a while at night and learned to write, read, and speak.

CITIZENSHIP 1937 he went to Lincoln and studied for this. Had to know 25 questions. Had two witnesses, Hagen, a barber in town. They had to know John for five years. Judge Smith from Seattle gave him his papers. Judge asked 4-6 questions.

BERGEN Used to be known as Bjørgvin years ago when the Germans were there. The Germans built up every building down on the docks.

BERGEN Built by the Germans. Has changed a lot since the war. As a boy, he walked on the Solensgaten (Solensvei), now known as Danmarks Torget.

Childhood home still standing. Have torn down many old houses and built condominiums and apartments. Outside of town in Fyllingsdalen, they have built a lot of block homes.

Discusses problems with rodents. No good sewer system. They tore these houses down because the rodents lived there.

TRIPS BACK In 1953 he took a boat and went to where his wife was from. A textile town called Dale i Brudvik which is now Dale i Kvam.

WIFE Met at a mixed choir of the Sons and Daughters of Norway. Wife came to the U.S. in 1920 with her family. Her name was Gudrun Blutcher. She was a German because her grandfather was German. She had a brother and sister in the states.

WIFE Didn't want to go back to Norway in 1953 with John. She worked for Day's Tailor. She didn't like her work.

WIFE'S WORK Didn't make much. Did piece work on an assembly line making coats. Highest she made was \$10 a day. She always did sewing.

WEDDING In 1929, June 29th in Tacoma at the Lutheran church on 35th Avenue. Quite a few people attended. She had quite a dress and he had a blue suit. When he was married he had \$3.80 in his pocket. He didn't have any more money than this.

Took a honeymoon later on to the Songefest in Astoria, Oregon.

HOUSING Lived in a rented house for \$20 a month when first married. He describes the experience of renting a house. No real owner of the house.

Lived on K Street for a while. Son was born on 36th and L, Norman Johnson. He was in school. Belonged to the Marines. He went to Korea and was killed shortly after his arrival there.

John and his wife received some money when their son died because he had insurance. They went to Norway on this money. Did them a lot of good.

BOAT TRIP They took the boat to Norway. Took nine days. Got seasick because there wasn't enough air. Took the Stavangerfjord.

CHILDREN Clarence Johnson was their second son. He was a schoolteacher for 6-8- years at Wilson High School (Tacoma, Wash.). He was a counselor. Went to the University of Puget Sound and studied education. He was a hard worker.

CHILDREN Clarence also built houses. He's now a building contractor. He's married and has four kids: Norman, Kerry Marie, Matthew, and Andrew. One goes to high school, another to junior high. Kerry is married.

GRANDCHILDREN Norman is in South Africa with the Peace Corps. He went to school for two years in California. He's showing people how to build houses. Isn't much pay, but he enjoys it. He speaks French in South Africa.

CHURCH Active in Bethlehem Lutheran on 38th Street. Children went here too. Was a Norwegian church out in Federal Way.

SONS OF NORWAY Sang in the Norwegian Male Chorus for 54 years. Life member at the Sons of Norway.

LANGUAGE Talks about his English speaking and writing being poor. He didn't take time to go to school. He had to work for his living, couldn't go on welfare.

Talks about a fellow who had difficulty fitting in over here.

LANGUAGE Didn't teach the children Norwegian. One son learned 'Hellige Jul' in school from the teacher.

TRIP TO NORWAY IN 1968 Changes: people were more independent; have more money, one dollar is worth seven pounds. Good jobs, but little pay.

FIRST IMPRESSION Hard to first break into living in the U.S. when he came in the 1920s.

SONS OF NORWAY Member twice, joined in 1924 and 1943. Sang in the male chorus for many years. Was the librarian in the choir. Can't sing now since his stroke.

STROKE Talks about when he had his stroke, Thanksgiving 1979.

WIFE Wasn't real sick before she died. He talks about her some.

WIFE'S ILLNESS She was taking treatment for it. She had a brain scan. She had cancer. She was at home for a while. John cared for her. She was in Tacoma General two weeks before she died. He goes on in some detail about his wife's death.

They were married for 52 years. 'Can't just forget about it.'

SPOKEN NORWEGIAN Doesn't speak much anymore. Wife and friends are gone. John speaks a little Norwegian and English.

Norwegian has more or less gone out of him. Proud to be Norwegian.

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TRIPS John would like to go to Norway but his stroke has slowed him down.